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ABSTRACT

This study reports the quick growth and the rapidly changing nature and function of the preschool centers in the City of Greater Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia. Chapter I summarizes 2 previous studies related to the social distribution of preschool services. Chapter II briefly reports survey data on topics ranging from preschool sponsorship to equipment and staff training. Chapter III presents an overview of data related to the custodial function of preschool kindergartens. It was found that the centres in Greater Wollongong are mainly attended by children of mothers who do not work and who require child care for less than a full week while increasing numbers of working mothers do not use the services. Chapter IV discusses the educational function of the centres. Attention is given to the special educational program needs of working class children. Survey data on demographic variables such as parents' country of birth and education are reported. It was found that fathers of the preschool children were likely to have professional and managerial occupations. The survey reveals differences between parents' and preschool administrators' views of the aims of preschool education. Chapter V provides a summary and discusses issues related to preschool. Chapter VI presents conclusions and recommendations. (RH)

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CUSTODY, CARE, AND NURTURE:

Trends in early-childhood education in Wollongong

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Department of Education
University of Wollongong
April, 1978

CUSTODY, CARE, AND NURTURE:

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A Report on the nature and clientele of institutions attended by preschool children in the city of Greater Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia.

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I - Introduction

This study of child-care centres and preschool education is the third of a series of investigations into factors affecting educational opportunity and the care of preschool children in the Illawarra, N.S.W.

The first of these was a preliminary study concerned particularly with the effects of change in the nature of the family unit (Blakey 1970). It appeared that women were entering the workforce at an increasing rate, which significantly altered the nature of regional and national economies. This was among the logical consequences of a long-term gradual transfer of production activity out of the household and into market-oriented or communal agencies. Child care and education of preschool children were still retained largely within the family unit, but families and particularly the mothers were seeking more and more to share the responsibility with outside agencies.

The interest of the family, employers, and government in child care was the principal reason for the regional demand for preschool centres and for the support which led to a big increase in their numbers - both creches and kindergartens. It appeared likely, however, that preschool education would be given precedence over child care if the family and the community generally appreciated the educational and later vocational difficulties which could result from lack of preschool education. While the majority of children may have a good preschool education at home, a substantial and probably increasing number are handicapped by the lack of it.

The second study (Fisher, de Lacey, and Blakey, 1971) described in some detail the rapidly expanding child-care and preschool-education facilities. It established the nature of the existing establishments in terms of premises and equipment, costs, enrolments, and the organizational structure. The most significant results were based on a study of the socio-economic environments of the preschool centres and the employment, educational standing and other characteristics of the parents.

The outcome of the study suggested that the present system quite clearly fails to provide child care for those whose need is greatest and that it usually fails to provide preschool education for the children

who would benefit most from it. The main conclusion was that child care and preschool education require reorientation, and that the Department of Education (and not the Child Welfare Department, now renamed Department of Youth and Community Services) should take charge of them.

This third study shows in detail the rapidly changing nature and function of the preschool centres. One of the main findings is that there is an increasing awareness of preschooling at all levels of society, from the individual citizen to those in government circles. This not only resulted in a tremendous expansion in the number of facilities, but also signifies a diversification in preschool administration, from private to Government-run centres.

This has in turn resulted in a greatly increased subsidization scheme which is not without its problems, particularly in the areas of hours of operation and cost structures. These conflicts are having repercussions on the morale of the whole service, with some bitterness on the part of private operators towards subsidized centres.

It has also been shown that the greatest demand is for a service of one day or less per week, and is patronized predominantly by the non-working mother. The parents who are more highly qualified, who have occupations of higher status, and whose earnings are higher, are over-represented in the preschool population.

The outcome of this third study reiterates many of the recommendations of previous reports. First, the present system does not cater for those whose need is greatest. Secondly, there is a strong case for subsidization of the individual child rather than the centre. Thirdly, there are deficiencies in the present system, not the least of which include hours of operation, quality of service, lack of individualized programs of instruction and development, and the cost to those least able to afford such care. Lastly, the child of the working mother is penalized by not having a mother present every day, and then not even having the benefits of preschool care. Overall, with the increase in both size and variability of preschooling since the second study, the case for the incorporation of preschools within the state education system seems even stronger.

II - Preschool Centres in Wollongong

In December, 1970 there were twenty-one preschool centres in the Wollongong urban area, as compared with forty-two in the month of November, 1977. A fourth region, Shellharbour, (a subdivision of what was previously the Southern region)was added to this research. This subdivision was made primarily because of the extensive and significant residential development in this area in recent years. In 1970, there were seven preschools in each of the three areas examined (Northern, Central, and Southern). In 1977 there were ten in the Northern region (an increase of three), sixteen in the Central region (an increase of nine), seven in the Southern region (no increase) and nine in the Shellharbour region, only one of which was previously surveyed, having been included in the Southern region.

The previous report stated that the number of centres had almost doubled in the five years preceding the research; i.e., ten centres opened between 1965 and 1970, as against five in the previous five years. Between 1970 and 1977, however, the increase is 82.61%. A number of new centres are presently planned. There are two in the Northern region, two in the Central region, five in the Southern region, and two in the Shellharbour region. In addition there is one preschool planned for handicapped children.

Of the forty-two preschools, twenty-two are privately operated, seven are church controlled, five are directed primarily by parents' cooperative groups or community groups, four operate under the auspices of the Education Department, three are run by the Kindergarten Union and one by the City Council.

Premises range from remodelled backyard garages to new buildings, architecturally designed specifically for preschool purposes. Whereas the previous paper reported the most frequently located preschools were to be found in Church halls or old converted houses, most of those opened in the last seven years are in newly constructed buildings.

Preschool buildings, equipment and personnel are inspected by the Department of Youth and Community Services, marking a significant and valuable change in governmental attitude towards the operations of preschool education. Whereas in 1970 nine preschools were licensed, five had provisional permits and seven were completely without license or

permit, in 1977 forty were licensed and only two, which were smaller 'custodial' centres, were not licensed. This trend is further evidenced by the new governmental directives that all preschools have trained personnel on the staff.

The equipment used in the centres was chosen, in many cases, directly from lists and circulars provided by the Department of Youth and Community Services. These circulars advise on the type of equipment recommended to be incorporated into craft and indoor play, as well as in the outdoor playground. The advice is detailed and includes, for example, suggestions on the construction of equipment, discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of various play materials and lists of suitable stories and games for preschool children. Whereas the previous report stated that in only three cases had supervisors gone beyond the lists when purchasing equipment, this study found that the majority now sought to provide a still broader range of activities and experiences for the children. One area where some preschools had departed from the more traditional aids was in the introduction of organized programs aimed at both intellectual and emotional development. Some go as far as to conduct the whole of the day's activities to musical accompaniment. Not only are the children played music by which to dance and paint, but also the classics. Personnel who have incorporated music programs suggest that many children are not exposed to such experiences at home, and learn an appreciation of music and the other arts that is sometimes lacking especially in underprivileged homes.

The 1970 study stated that most of the staff had no preschool teacher training, and of the twenty-one supervisors, four were trained nurses, five were teachers (Department of Education), two were trained preschool teachers and ten had no training. In 1977 there were seventeen trained preschool teachers, seven trained infants' teachers, two trained primary school teachers, and four supervisors were in the process of completing a technical college course. Untrained staff, however, still outnumbered trained staff by ninety-seven to twenty-six. In a few cases, mothers helped at the centre on a roster basis. Twenty of the forty-two preschools had at least one trained and qualified person on the premises.

During a typical week, three thousand and eighty-six children spend at least part of one day per week in the care of a preschool centre. The previous report stated the number as one thousand, four hundred and thirty-one, indicating an increase of 115.65% since the

last research. Enrolment at individual centres ranged from eleven to two hundred.

The total enrolment is approximately 36.22%* (not available from the 1971 census) of the total estimated number of preschool-aged children (from three to five years of age for legal operation) in Wollongong. Exactly one third of the centres reported waiting lists. No total was compiled owing to the inherent inadequacies in estimating the extent of waiting lists, and few centres were willing to 'guess' at a figure. Half of the preschools had vacancies, more particularly in the Southern region where the subsidized centres had considerably eroded the clientele of the private centres, mainly owing to economic factors (for example, some subsidized centres were able to undercut the fees of private centres by up to 50%).

Fees from the parents of children enrolled were the major source of funds for the non-subsidized centres. Overall there is a wide discrepancy in the fees currently being charged. These range from $1.80 per day (or $9.00 per week at the Department of Education centres) and $2.30 per day at the cheapest subsidized church-controlled centre, to $5.50 at the non-subsidized private centres (refer to Table 3). There is also considerable variation depending on whether the preschool is operating on an hourly, sessional, daily, weekly, or term basis. Of the forty-two centres, two operate on an hourly basis, five on a sessional basis, thirty-two on a daily basis (including arrangements for both half and full days), two on a weekly basis and one on a term basis (with three terms in the year).

Though fees are a source of income for most centres, a number receive subsidies. A breakdown of the types of centres and their source of fundings is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Cost per day of Preschools, Subsidized, and Unsubsidized, operated by Various Bodies

	Private	Comm-unity	Church	Kinder-garten Union	Educ. Dept	Council	Total
Subsidy	1	3	6	3	4	-	17
Av. cost/day	$5.00	$3.37	$2.88	$3.80	$1.80	-	
Non-subsidy	21	2	1	-	-	1	25
Av. cost/day	$4.60	$3.75	$3.00	-	-	-	

*Estimate from Child Endowment Figures as at 4/8/77

Table 2

Percentage of Parents who would make more use of Preschool Facilities if they were free

Answer	%	N
Yes	51.70	743
No	43.55	625
Not stated	4.74	68

A perusal of Table 3 would indicate that the subsidization of various centres is successful in attracting children of parents on lower incomes.

Table 3

Family Income - Subsidized vs Non-Subsidized Centres

	Non-Subsidized		Subsidized	
$/wk	N	%	N	%
10-20	0	0	0	0
21-40	0	0	1	.14
41-60	0	0	1	.14
61-80	6	1.11	9	1.22
81-100	3	.56	8	1.08
101-120	24	4.44	21	2.85
121-150	50	9.26	85	11.52
151-180	63	11.67	102	13.82
181-230	115	21.30	168	22.76
231-300	96	17.78	150	20.33
301-400	90	16.67	98	13.28
401+	59	10.93	55	7.45
N.S	34	6.30	40	5.42
Total	540	100.02	738	100.01

$\chi^2 = 29.6005$ d.f = 12 χ^2 .01 = 26.22 P< .01

$\bar{X}_{subsidized} = 208.71$

$\bar{X}_{non\text{-}subsidized} = 222.01$

Of the forty-two centres surveyed, only one preferred not to participate in any way at all - the "Guys and Dolls" preschool in Oak Flats. A second centre, Illawarra Grammar Preschool, requested that the researchers supply a letter stating their requirements, a copy of the last journal article reporting the 1970 survey, and a request for the parents to participate. This was to be accompanied with a letter from the headmaster. Although these conditions were fulfilled by the researchers, no replies have been received after several months.

Table 4

Preschool Centres in the Wollongong Urban Area

Table 4A

Northern Area

Centre		Suburb	Weekly Enrolment	Charges
Bulli Preschool	(L)	Bulli	120	$4.30/day (2)*
Happy Haven	(L)	Towradgi	60	av.$4.20/day (1)*
Helensburgh	(L)	Helensburgh	80	$2.00/session (2)
Korrimul Koala	(L)	Corrimal	67	$3.50/day (2)
Pied Piper	(L)	Towradgi	57	$4.00/day (2)
Sunny Dell	(L)	Towradgi	40	$4.00/day (2)
Thirroul	(L)	Thirroul	115	$5.00/day (2)
Thumberlina	(L)	Russell Vale	89	$5.00/day (2)
Tiny Tots	(L)	Woonona	80	$4.00/day (2)
Wombarra	(L)	Wombarra	64	$3.50/day (2)

Table 4B

Central Area

Balgownie	(L)	Balgownie	73	$4.50/day (2)
Council	(L)	Wollongong	-	$1/session (2)
Fairy Meadow Child Care	(L)	Fairy Meadow	55	$5.00/day (2)
Fairy Meadow Dem. School	(L)	Fairy Meadow	50	$2.00/week (2)
Illawarra	(L)	Balgownie	45	60¢/hour(2)
Illawarra Grammar	(L)	West W/gong	11	$5.00/day approx.(1)
Keiraville	(L)	Keiraville	140	60¢/hour(2)
Kid's Uni	(NR)	Wollongong Uni	47	50¢/hour(2)
Mother Goose	(L)	Wollongong	100	$4.75/day (2)
Mt Ousley	(L)	Fairy Meadow	50	$4.50/day (2)
Peter Pan	(L)	Mangerton	54	$2.50/day (2)
St Columba's	(L)	Figtree	60	$3.50/day (2)
St Michael's	(L)	Wollongong	100	$2.50/day (2)
Sunny Corner	(L)	Wollongong	61	$4.00/day (2)
Tinkerbell	(L)	Gwynneville	116	$5.40/day (2)
Western Suburbs	(L)	Mangerton	60	$4.50/day (2)

Table 4C

Southern Area

Centre		Suburb	Weekly Enrolment	Charges	
Berkeley Lake Hts	(L)	Berkeley	98	$4.20/day	(2)
Dapto	(L)	Dapto	200	$5.50/day	(2)
Kembalwarra Public School	(L)	Kemblawarra	30	$9.00/week	(2)
Palm Tree	(L)	Dapto	88	$4.50/day	(2)
Small World	(NR)	Warrawong	-	45¢/hour	(2)
St Luke's	(L)	Dapto	155	$2.30/day	(2)
St Stephen's	(L)	Port Kembla	90	$3.00/day	(2)

Table 4D

Shellharbour Area

Green Meadows	(L)	Albion Park Rail	84	$5.00/day	(2)
Guys and Dolls	(L)	Oak Flats	80	Refused to participate	
Illawarra	(L)	Lake Illawarra Sth	90	$4.50/day	(2)
Jack and Jill	(L)	Warilla	33	$4.00/day	(2)
Little People	(L)	Mt Warrigal	14	$5.00/day	(1)
Mt Warrigal	(L)	Mt Warrigal	38	$9.00/week	(2)
Oak Flats Public School	(L)	Oak Flats	75	$2.00/day	(2)
St Peter's	(L)	Albion Park Rail	97	$2.50/day	(2)
Warilla Baptist	(L)	Warilla	100	$3.00/day	(2)

Notes: (L) means that the centre has been licensed by the Department of Youth and Community Services.

(NR) means that the centre is unlicensed

*(1) - information supplied by parents

(2) - information supplied by preschool

III - The Custodial Function

Preschool kindergartens generally serve at least three purposes: custodial, educational, and social/developmental. This section is concerned primarily with the custodial purpose, which is simply the safe minding of children. This particular function is increasingly in demand as the number of working mothers expands. While the custodial function is an important consideration, however, there appears to be some stigma attached to this purpose, for only seven of the forty-two preschools stated that it was one of their aims.

As shown in the previous study, there has been in Wollongong an increasing participation of women in the workforce (refer Table 5), but this tendency is not as marked as it is in the Sydney or Newcastle statistical districts. One of the deterrents to women working in Wollongong is likely to be the lack of suitable preschool facilities for the custodial requirement of young children associated so closely with working mothers. This is further evidenced by the fact that the majority of centre users are the children of non-working mothers. In addition, not all the centres have hours which adequately cover the requirements of most working mothers. Most subsidized centres, including the four run by the Department of Education, are only available for less than six hours per day - far too short a duration to fulfil the demands of those engaged in the labour force.

The Australian trend towards greater participation of women in the workforce has been evident in the Wollongong statistical district. Whereas in 1961 the female workforce as a proportion of the total workforce was 18.83%, it rose to 22.87% in 1966, and 25.23% in 1971. The figures from the 1976 census are not available; the trend, however, is likely to continue. Between 1961, 1966, and 1971, the proportion of women who worked increased from 27.72% through 32.82% to 35.10%.

The last figures in Table 5 suggest that women were entering the workforce at a faster rate, relative to men, than had been the case previously. During 1961-66, 43.77% of the additions to the Illawarra workforce were women; between 1966 and 1971, however, 49.13% of the increase was women.

Table 5

Females in the Workforce as a Proportion of the Total Workforce - Wollongong

Year	Women aged 15-59	Women in the Workforce	Participation %	Total Workforce	Female Workforce as a proportion of total Workforce
1954	28048	7241	25.82	39560	18.30
1961	41303	11447	27.72	60776	18.83
1966	50024	16417	32.82	72132	22.87
1971	57196	20077	35.10	79582	25.23

Source: Commonwealth Censuses, 1954, 1961, 1966, 1971

Table 6

Proportion of Increase in the Workforce

June Year:	1954-1961	1961-1966	1966-1971
Females	19.82	43.77	49.13
Males	80.18	56.23	50.87

Source: Commonwealth Censuses, 1954, 1961, 1966, 1971

The female participation rate in the Newcastle district had been very similar to that of Wollongong up until 1966. Of the total Newcastle workforce in 1966, 25.30% were women; in 1971, 28.53% were women. By 1971, the similarity between the two districts was decreasing with a more rapid assimilation into the Newcastle workforce than in Wollongong.

Table 7

Females in the Workforce as a Proportion of the Total Workforce - Newcastle

Year	Women aged 15-59	Women in the Workforce	Participation %	Total Workforce	Female Workforce as a proportion of total workforce
1954	71835	18635	25.94	94423	19.74
1961	87916	23920	27.21	114476	20.90
1966	94605	31810	33.62	125742	25.30
1971	102114	39040	38.23	136849	28.53

Source: Commonwealth Censuses, 1954, 1961, 1966, 1971

In comparison to the Sydney statistical district, both Wollongong and Newcastle showed a considerable lag in the assimilation of women into the workforce. Some suggestions as to the reasons for this trend could include the diversity of the Sydney employment mix and all forms of economic activity, thus creating more jobs for women, and the demographic characteristics of the Sydney population as compared to those of Wollongong or Newcastle.

Table 8

Females in the Workforce as a Proportion of the Total Workforce - Sydney

Year	Women aged 15-59	Women in the Workforce	Participation %	Total Workforce	Female Workforce as a proportion of total Workforce
1954	589425	225747	38.30	831188	27.16
1961	677797	290125	42.80	993944	29.19
1966	767546	378304	49.29	1152095	32.84
1971	853986	438326	51.33	1268768	34.55

Source: Commonwealth Censuses, 1954, 1961, 1966, 1971

Table 9 shows the proportion of married women of child-bearing age in the workforce and outlines the changing structure of the workforce. No direct comparisons can be made between this report and the previous one nor even a direct comparison between the 1966 and 1971 figures owing to changes in the census categories.

Table 9

Married Women of Child-Bearing Age in the Workforce

	1966	1971
Women aged 15-59	50024	66486*
Married women aged 15-59	40444	55513*
Women in workforce aged 15-59	16417	20077
Married women in workforce aged 15-59	8946	13963*
Women of child-bearing age (15-45)	37928	42620
Married women of child-bearing age (15-45)	28765	cannot ascertain
Women in the workforce of child-bearing age (15-45)	13572	16500
Women of child-bearing age, married and in the workforce - at least	6101	cannot ascertain
Percentage of women aged 15-59 in the workforce	32.82	30.20*
Married women of child-bearing age in the workforce, percentage of women aged 15-59	12.20	cannot ascertain

Source: Commonwealth Censuses, 1966, 1971

*Compared to 15 years and over, and not 15-59 years

No estimates as made in the previous report are possible.

The preschool centres at the moment can only have a limited influence on the process of any absorption of women into the workforce. The centres operate at hours which do very little in the way of accommodating working mothers. To serve working mothers, more centres would have to extend their hours considerably, and begin their day from 7.30 a.m. at the latest, to cater for those involved in industrial/factory occupations, and from 8 or 8.30 a.m. to cater for service, professional, and other occupations. In addition, the centres would have to remain open until at least 5 p.m. Of Wollongong's forty-two centres, only three open before 7.30 a.m. and close after 5 p.m. (there were previously eight overall). Only one centre could be said to cater for the factory worker, with children taken from 6.15 a.m., and remaining open until 4 p.m. Three others open from 7.30 a.m. until 5 or 5.30 p.m. Another three centres could cater for the 9 - 5 worker, opening from 8 or 8.30 a.m. until 5 p.m., two in the northern region and one in the central region (previously five).

The majority of centres either do not appear to be aware of this area of need, or else are unable to consider catering for the working parent. Thirty-five of the forty-two centres either commence their day at 9 or 9.30 a.m., or close early before 4 p.m. (most at 3 p.m.). These obviously do not fulfil the requirements of many working parents. An item which might be profitable to include in future questionnaires on this subject could be one asking parents whether they find the present hours of operation of preschool centres suitable for their needs.

The times as outlined above go part way in explaining why the majority of those using the centres are not working mothers: of 1214 mothers whose questionnaires were completed 161 worked part-time, 133 worked full-time and 920 did not work. Thus, 75.78% of mothers using the centres were not working.

For the working mother, other forms of child care, such as 'babysitting' by relatives or neighbours, may prove more satisfactory than preschool care because of availability, transport, hours of operations, and cost.

Another difficulty encountered by working mothers' attempting to send their children to preschool is transport, in arranging for a child to be delivered to, or picked up from, a centre while the mother is at work. Of the forty-two centres, only four provide any form of pick-up service for children.

If the centres did open at hours to suit both the factory and office worker, say 6.30 a.m. till 5.30 p.m., charges would increase considerably to cover increasing wage payments, accentuated by the increasing demand for trained staff, but an even greater proportion of mothers might make other arrangements. It is interesting to note that approximately 15 preschools stated that they simply could not afford to extend hours of operation. Indeed, it was suggested that there was no market pressure to do so irrespective of wage constraints, for most centres are already operating on their maximum enrolment, or very near this level.

The custodial function of preschool centres is not fulfilled primarily in the interests of employers and working mothers. The centres are mainly patronised by the children of mothers who do not go to work at all: 75.78% of the mothers who responded to this questionnaire did not go to work; 13.26% worked part-time, and only 10.95% worked full-time. Further, 84.35% of the children surveyed attended the centres for only two days or less per week. In the main, the custodial function is fulfilled by Wollongong's

preschool centres primarily only for non-working mothers who require care for children for less than a full week.

The breakdown of the days per week that children are attending preschool centres is shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Attendance at Preschool on a Time Basis

	Under 1 day	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days
Shellharbour	43	144	35	3	1	21
Southern	4	160	75	8	6	24
Northern	15	171	60	8	3	15
Central	56	177	138	82	4	22
Total	118	652	308	104	14	82
%	9.23	51.02	24.10	8.14	1.10	6.42

From the above Table, it is clear that 84.35% of children attended for two days per week or less. The largest attendance is one day per week - 51.02%. Only 6.42% of children attend the centre for a full five days per week.

Wollongong's existing preschool system will contribute little to any future increase in female participation in the local workforce; there are not enough centres in areas where the proportion of working mothers is high; their operating hours are inconvenient; and, because of the relative availability of low-cost alternatives, the majority of working mothers are likely to make other arrangements in any case.

IV The Educational Function

(a) Introduction

We consider the arguments for the educational function, included on pages 10 and 11 of the previous report, have continuing validity. Briefly these arguments implied that the physical well-being of children in preschool centres, from the custodial point of view, is supervised primarily by the Department of Youth and Community Services, which inspects the registered centres and their equipment. From an educational point of view, the matter is more complex. Whether or not a centre's program of activities is seen as having some educational value may depend largely on the home background of the child and the point of view of the investigator. Opinions about theories of "social class", about the importance of school success and the usefulness for particular purposes of specific types of preschool program, will incline the investigator to evaluate the program, at any centre, favourably or unfavourably.

This section adopts the argument, for which there is now substantial evidence, that at least two different types of preschooling are required for two different groups of children: those from relatively "disadvantaged" homes and those from relatively "advantaged" homes. The latter group still makes up the bulk of preschool enrolments in Wollongong, and the sort of activity provided in the centres is of some educational and social value for them. However, Wollongong's preschool centres do not seem to emphasise helping disadvantaged children to succeed at school or in a wider social context.

There is considerable evidence of inequalities of educational opportunity within the Wollongong area and these may be partly overcome by the provision of suitable preschools for those children who most need them. It is of major importance to Wollongong that preschool education of the sort required is generally not available where socio-economic conditions have created a special need for it. This is despite the development in Australia of programs which have demonstrated a large measure of success in meeting this need (de Lacey 1974, Nurcombe 1976).

(b) Socioeconomic Status and Preschool Education

The idea of "socioeconomic status" is derived from the notion of social class. Sociologists, educationalists, and others use this latter term differently. In general, however, "social class" is taken to mean that individuals differ in, for example, their occupations, income, education, and location and that these differences affect the individual's life style and his family's chances of material success. Those with similar sorts of

background are regarded as members of the same class. Efforts to render this idea more precise and susceptible to study led to the notion of socioeconomic status. This term refers to the ranking of individuals on indices constructed to measure social class. Occupation, education and income are the characteristics of class most commonly measured. But ethnic and cultural differences among individuals have been linked with these in the notion of educational advantage.

Advantaged children tend to encounter a wide variety of experiences in particular sequences. Examples of these experiences are a variety of selected toys considered appropriate for each age level, planned visits to places other than their own homes and exposure to selected language and behaviour models. These experiences help the child to acquire the patterns of language and reasoning skills which form the basis of success at school.

Disadvantaged children, on the other hand, have a more restricted range of experience, with a less adequate and less systematic ordering of the experiences. The parents of a disadvantaged child tend not to encourage a child to value education as much as do parents of the advantaged child. The upbringing of disadvantaged children tends to be impulsive and uninhibited, when compared with that of the advantaged, which is regarded as being more rational, controlled, and guided. Disadvantaged children are characterised by poorer perceptual skills, lower measured intelligence (especially when the verbal symbolic content of the tests is high) and lower levels of school achievement. The disadvantaged children tend to come from families of low socioeconomic status.

Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) have argued that the type of preschool program required for disadvantaged children differs from that required for the advantaged. The traditional pattern of preschool activities is of value to the advantaged child because it complements his home life and rounds out his already rich diet of experience. Contrasts between the advantaged child's home environment and the preschool environment include:

1. Whereas the home environment is especially rich in verbal experience, the school stresses seeing and doing.
2. Whereas the child, at home, may be subject to many prohibitions, the school encourages, within limits, freedom and independence.
3. Whereas the child's parents may discourage messy activities, the school gives the child the opportunity to play with clay, sand, dough, water, finger paints, etc.
4. Whereas the child's parents may demand high levels of achievement, the nursery school allows the child to set his own standards.

On the other hand, the activities of preschool so valuable to the advantaged child - free play, messy play, and freedom from competitive pressures - tend not to complement or enrich the environment of disadvantaged children, but duplicate it.

Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) devised a program specifically for disadvantaged children. Intensive methods of direct teaching were used, the attention and participation of each child was demanded and discipline was maintained. The program concentrated on the areas of skill most essential to school success: language, arithmetic, and reading. After a year's work they were able to report significant advances by the children in these areas. An experimental preschool enrichment project for disadvantaged children at Bourke, N.S.W., has shown that, while traditional kindergarten methods produce only a small and generally insignificant improvement in mental functioning, quite marked gains in a number of skills can follow a one-year, modified Bereiter-Engelmann program.

Subsequent follow-up studies at the Bourke centre and similar studies in other countries are suggesting that, while there is some erosion of the earlier gains around middle childhood, the gains tend to reappear in adolescence (de Lacey 1974, Nurcombe 1976, Twomey and de Lacey 1977).

Because of changes which have occurred in economic conditions, demography and social policy since the first survey in 1970, a further study was carried out in 1977. The findings of this study and the conclusions derived from it form the substance of the remainder of this report.

Child's Country of Birth

Of the 1436 children whose parents responded to the questionnaire, 30 or 2.9% were born overseas; 9 or 1% of these came from non-English speaking countries. In the previous report, 28 children (7.84%) were born overseas.

A greater proportion of the children's parents were born overseas; in this study 14.07% of fathers and 12.99% of mothers were born in the British Isles; 11.63% of fathers and 6.70% of mothers were born in mainland Europe. The European-born group is under-represented among preschool parents relative to the population. European-born fathers constitute 16.14% of the population, and European-born mothers 13.12%. These differences were found to be significant at .01 level, although some regions did not yield significant differences by themselves, as shown in Tables 11 to 15.

Table 11

Child's Country of Birth

Area	Northern		Central		Southern		Shellharbour		Total	
Country	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Australia	265	97.78	621	96.73	276	99.64	243	98.78	1405	97.84
British Isles	4	1.48	9	1.40	-	-	2	.81	15	1.04
Europe	1	.37	1	.16	-	-	1	.40	3	.21
Other	-	-	11	1.71	1	.36	-	-	12	.84
Not Stated	1	.37	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.07
Total	271	100.0	642	100.0	277	100.0	246	99.99	1436	100.0

Source: Commonwealth Census 1971

Table 12

Country of Birth of the Fathers of Children in Wollongong's Preschool Centres and of the Male Adult Population

Table 12A

Northern Area

Country of Birth:	Australia	British Isles	Europe	Other	Total
Male population No:	18360	3501	2460	374	24695
%:	74.35	14.18	9.96	1.51	100
Preschool Fathers :	223	33	14	1	271
%:	82.29	12.18	5.17	.37	100.01

χ^2 = 11.65 d.f = 3 χ^2.05 = 7.82 P< .05

Table 12B

Central Area

Male population No:	16954	2758	3102	499	23313
%:	72.72	11.83	13.31	2.14	100
Preschool Fathers :	466	78	84	14	642
%:	72.59	12.15	13.08	2.18	100

χ^2 = .0864 d.f = 3 χ^2.05 = 7.82 n.s

Table 12C

Southern Area

Male population No:	21656	4703	8370	535	35264
%:	61.41	13.34	23.74	1.52	100.01
Preschool Fathers :	189	51	32	5	277
%:	68.23	18.41	11.55	1.81	100

χ^2 = 27.40 d.f= 3 χ^2 .01 = 16.27 P< .01

Table 12D

Shellharbour Area

Male population No:	10842	2920	2091	135	15988
%:	67.81	18.26	13.08	.84	99.99
Preschool Fathers :	167	40	37	2	246
%:	67.89	16.26	15.04	.81	100

χ^2 = 1.2635 d.f = 3 χ^2.05 = 7.82 n.s

Table 12 (cont'd)

Father's Country of Birth - Preschool vs Population

Table 12E

Total Wollongong Area

Country of Birth:	Australia	British Isles	Europe	Other	Total
Male population No:	67812	13882	16023	1543	99260
%:	68.32	13.99	16.14	1.55	100
Preschool Fathers :	1045	202	167	22	1436
%:	72.77	14.07	11.63	1.53	100

$\chi^2 = 22.27$ d.f = 3 χ^2 .01 = 16.27 P< .01

Source: Population data taken from Commonwealth Census 1971

Table 13

Country of Birth of Non-Australian born Fathers and Period of Residence in Australia

Country of Birth:	British Isles	Europe	Other	Not Stated
Table 13A				
Northern Area				
Less 5 years	2	-	-	-
More 5 years	25	13	1	-
Not Stated	6	1	-	-
Total	33	14	1	-
Table 13B				
Central Area				
Less 5 years	4	4	4	-
More 5 years	73	73	10	-
Not Stated	1	7	-	-
Total	78	84	14	-

Table 13 (cont'd)

Country of Birth of Non-Australian born Fathers and Period of Residence in Australia

Country of Birth:	British Isles	Europe	Other	Not Stated
	Table 13C			
	Southern Area			
Less 5 years	1	-	1	-
More 5 years	46	32	4	-
Not Stated	4	-	-	-
Total	51	32	5	-
	Table 13D			
	Shellharbour Area			
Less 5 years	2	1	-	-
More 5 years	36	31	2	-
Not Stated	2	5	-	-
Total	40	37	2	-
	Table 13E			
	Total Wollongong Area			
Less 5 years	9	5	5	-
More 5 years	180	149	17	-
Not Stated	13	13	-	-
Total	202	167	22	-

Table 14

Country of Birth of Non-Australian Born Mothers and Period of Residence in Australia

Table 14A

Northern Area

Country of Birth:	British Isles	Europe	Other	Not Stated
Less 5 years*	5	-	-	-
More 5 years*	24	11	1	-
Not Stated	3	1	1	22
Total	32	12	2	22

Table 14B

Central Area

Less 5 years	5	2	3	-
More 5 years	65	43	7	-
Not Stated	6	2	-	12
Total	76	47	10	12

Table 14C

Southern Area

Less 5 years	2	1	1	-
More 5 years	41	18	2	-
Not Stated	2	-	-	16
Total	45	19	3	16

Table 14D

Shellharbour Area

Less 5 years	2	1	-	-
More 5 years	32	15	1	-
Not Stated	1	3	-	-
Total	35	19	1	-

*The 1971 Census divides period of residence into basically two categories: less than five years' residence, and more than five years' residence. Further details are available in the Collector District data (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1971).

Table 15

Country of Birth of the Mothers of Children in Wollongong's Preschool Centres and of the Female Population

Table 15A

Northern Area

Country of Birth:	Australia	British Isles	Europe	Other	Total
Female Population No:	17973	3434	2102	349	23858
%:	75.33	14.39	8.81	1.46	99.99
Preschool Mothers No:	225	32	12	2	271
%:	83.03	11.81	4.43	.74	100.01

$\chi^2 = 10.27$ d.f. = 3 $\chi^2.05 = 7.82$ $P < .05$

Table 15B

Central Area

Female Population No:	14199	5626	2296	431	22552
%:	62.96	24.95	10.18	1.91	100
Preschool Mothers No:	508	76	47	10	641
%:	79.25	11.86	7.33	1.56	100

$\chi^2 = 76.58$ d.f. = 3 $\chi^2 .01 = 16.27$ $P < .01$

Table 15C

Southern Area

Female Population No:	20825	4240	6022	380	31467
%:	66.18	13.47	19.14	1.20	99.99
Preschool Mothers No:	210	45	19	3	277
%:	75.81	16.25	6.86	1.08	100

$\chi^2 = 27.33$ d.f. = 3 $\chi^2.01 = 16.27$ $P < .01$

Table 15D

Shellharbour Area

Female Population No:	10520	2754	1783	109	15166
%:	69.37	18.16	11.76	.72	100.01
Preschool Mothers No:	179	35	19	1	234
%:	76.50	14.96	8.12	.43	100.01

$\chi^2 = 5.95$ d.f. = 3 $\chi^2.05 = 7.82$ n.s.

Table 15 (cont'd)

Country of Birth of the Mothers of Children in Wollongong's Preschool Centres and of the Female Population

Table 15E

Total Wollongong Area

Country of Birth:	Australia	British Isles	Europe	Other	Total
Female Population No:	63517	16054	12203	1269	93043
%:	68.27	17.25	13.12	1.36	100
Preschool Mothers No:	1146	188	97	16	1447
%:	79.20	12.99	6.70	1.11	100

$\chi^2 = 86.62$ d.f. = 3 $\chi^2.01 = 16.27$ $P < .01$

Source: Population data taken from Commonwealth Census, 1971.

Education of Parents

No direct comparisons with the previous report are possible owing to fundamental changes in the format of Census categories, apart from tertiary and University combined. Table 16 shows a massively significant difference between the educational qualifications of preschool parents and those of the population. The most marked difference is between the groups with either tertiary or university qualifications. Only 2.30% of the population of Wollongong had tertiary qualifications, whereas 9.12% of the preschool parents had attained such a level. Only 2.07% of the population were university qualified, whilst 10.86% of preschool parents had such qualifications. In this study, therefore, tertiary and university qualified people comprised 4.37% of the population and 19.98% of preschool parents.

This in itself suggests that the more highly qualified members of the population are over-represented among preschool parents. This over-

representation, however, is not as marked as that found in the previous study. In that report, 2.97% of the population had tertiary or university qualifications; 29.53% of preschool parents had such qualifications. Thus, whilst the percentage of tertiary trained people in the population has increased by 1.4% since 1971, the proportion of tertiary trained parents of preschool parents has decreased by 9.55%. This could indicate that there is an increasing awareness of the benefits of preschooling generally throughout the community, and the clientele is gradually becoming more evenly distributed between all levels of the community. On the other hand, it may mean that the custodial function is becoming greater than is admitted. Details of these findings are shown in Table 16.

Table 16

Education of the Parents of Wollongong's Preschool Children and of the Population

Table 16A
Northern Area

	Other	Trade/Tech	Tert	Uni	N.S.	Total
Population No.	11241	4477	328	248	-	16294
%	68.99	27.48	2.01	1.52	-	100
Preschool Parents No.	161	62	14	11	23	271
%	59.41	22.88	5.17	4.06	8.49	100.01

$\chi^2 = 30.59$ d.f = 4 χ^2 .001 = 18.46 P< .001

Table 17

Stated Aims of Preschool Administrators and Services Required by Parents

	Preschool		Parents	
	N	%	N	%
Social	45	54.89	973	55.98
Educational	20	24.39	203	11.68
Custodial	7	8.54	556	32.00
Other	10	12.20	6	.35
Total	82	100.02	1738	100.01

$\chi^2 = 1436.79$ d.f = 4 χ^2 .001 = 18.46 P< .001

Apart from the social function, the stated aims of preschooling and the desires of parents differ hugely. Preschools stress the educational function more than twice as much as parents; parents, however, are nearly four times as concerned with the custodial function than are preschools, only 8.54% of which list child minding as one of their aims. Preschools also attach much more importance than do parents to aims other than social, custodial, and educational - aims such as health, and religious instruction. Only .029% of parents stated that they wanted such services from preschools, while 12.2% of preschools aim to provide them. The wide disparity of aims of preschool education between preschool administrators and parents may indicate a lack of communication between the parties, and, from the parents' point of view, considerable deficiencies in the services provided by preschools. On the other hand, the discrepancy may point up a difference between the stated and actual aims of many preschools. It seems likely that both these antecedents contribute to this result.

The population and the fathers of preschool children were grouped on the basis of their occupations, the categories employed being those used by the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics (1971). Similar trends to those apparent in Table 18 emerge. There is a greatly disproportionate number of professional and managerial men among the fathers of preschool children. This group (0/1 in Table 18E) made up 12.68% of the male population, but 31.17% of preschool fathers. This compares with the

Table 16 (cont'd)

Education of the Parents of Wollongong's Preschool Children and of the Population

Table 16B

Central Area

	Other	Trade/Tech	Tert	Uni	N.S.	Total
Population No.	9786	4538	658	732	-	15714
%	62.27	28.88	4.19	4.66	-	100
Preschool Parents No.	281	125	80	136	19	641
%	43.84	19.50	12.48	21.22	2.96	100

χ^2=491.2 d.f = 4 χ^2.001 = 18.46 P <.001

Table 16C

Southern Area

Population No.	16026	5630	352	265	-	22273
%	71.95	25.28	1.58	1.19	-	100
Preschool Parents No.	198	35	27	1	17	278
%	71.22	12.59	9.71	.36	6.12	100

χ^2=135.79 d.f = 4 χ^2.001 = 18.46 P< .001

Table 16D

Shellharbour Area

Population No.	6179	2597	116	62	-	8954
%	69.00	29.00	1.30	.69	-	99.99
Preschool Parents No.	161	59	10	8	8	246
%	65.45	23.98	4.07	3.25	3.25	100

χ^2 = 40.38 d.f = 4 χ^2.001 = 18.46 P< .001

Table 16E

Total Wollonong Area

Population No.	43232	17242	1454	1307	-	63235
%	68.37	27.27	2.30	2.07	-	100.01
Preschool Parents No.	801	281	131	156	67	1436
%	55.78	19.57	9.12	10.86	4.67	100

χ^2 = 891.41 d.f = 4 χ^2 .001 = 18.46 P< .001

figures of 10.90% and 38.95% in the previous report. The figures on occupation therefore follow the trends of education levels; the over-representation of those of 'high' socio-economic status is still clearly evident, but is decreasing gradually. On the other hand, 57.64% of the male population were process workers, craftsmen and labourers (7/8 in Table 18E), but only 39.55% of fathers of preschool fathers were in this group. This compares with the previous report's figures of 63.34% to 36.05%, which indicates that the number of 7/8-classified occupations are decreasing, but that their representation is gradually increasing. Further inspection of figures from all of the sub-regions is consistent with the above figures. However, the Central region is clearly the most disparate, with 21.91% of the male population in 0/1 occupations, and 45.03% of preschool fathers in this group. This bias in favour of professional men amongst preschool fathers in the Central area may at least partially explain the exceptionally high return rate in that area (61.61%). Details are set out in Table 18.

Table 18

Occupations of the Fathers of Wollongong's Preschool Children and of the Male Civilian Employed Population

Table 18A

Northern Area

Category	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7/8	9	ns	Total	0/1
Pop. No.	888	630	929	588	141	1513	1043	7429	513	413	14087	1518
%	6.30	4.47	6.60	4.17	1.00	10.74	7.40	52.74	3.64	2.93	99.99	10.78
Fathers No.	43	31	7	11	6	24	24	95	10	20	271	74
%	15.87	11.44	2.58	4.06	2.21	8.86	8.86	35.06	3.69	7.38	100.01	27.31

$\chi^2 = 115.56$ d.f = 9 $\chi^2.001 = 27.88$ P<.001

Table 18B

Central Area

Pop. No	1886	1171	1103	625	100	485	788	6935	387	471	13951	3057
%	13.52	8.39	7.91	4.48	.72	3.48	5.65	49.71	2.77	3.38	100.01	21.91
Fathers No.	189	51	28	23	4	18	21	169	7	23	533	240
%	35.46	9.57	5.25	4.31	.75	3.38	3.94	31.71	1.31	4.31	99.9	45.03

$\chi^2 = 234.44$ d.f = 9 $\chi^2.001 = 27.88$ P< .001

Census Categories

0. Professional, technical and related workers.
1. Administrative, executive and managerial workers.
2. Clerical workers.
3. Sales workers.
4. Farmers, fishermen, hunters/timber-getters and related workers.
5. Miners, quarrymen and related workers.
6. Workers in transport and communication occupations.
7/8 Craftsmen, production-process workers and labourers.
9. Service, export and recreation workers.

Table 18 (cont'd)

Occupations of the Fathers of Wollongong's Preschool Children and of the Male Civilian Employed Population

Table 18C

Southern Area

Category	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7/8	9	ns	Total	0/1
Pop. No.	1012	685	1002	595	222	908	1294	13174	553	862	20307	1697
%	4.98	3.37	4.93	2.93	1.09	4.47	6.37	64.87	2.72	4.25	99.99	8.36
Fathers No.	31	21	6	17	2	20	16	132	13	19	277	52
%	11.19	7.58	2.17	6.14	.72	7.22	5.78	47.65	4.69	6.86	100	18.77

$\chi^2 = 76.34$ d.f = 9 $\chi^2.001 = 27.88$ P <.001

Table 18D

Shellharbour Area

Pop. No.	326	624	447	238	198	305	728	5273	239	204	8582	950
%	3.80	7.27	5.21	2.77	2.31	3.55	8.48	61.44	2.78	2.38	99.99	11.07
Fathers No.	30	17	5	10	3	11	26	128	4	10	244	47
%	12.30	6.97	2.05	4.10	1.23	4.51	10.65	52.46	1.64	4.10	100.01	19.26

$\chi^2 = 63.22$ d.f = 9 $\chi^2.001 = 27.88$ P< .001

Table 18 (cont'd)

Occupations of the Fathers of Wollongong's Preschool Children and of the Male Civilian Employed Population

Table 18E

Total Wollongong Region

Category	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7/8	9	ns	Total	0/1
Pop. No.	4112	3110	3481	2046	661	3211	3853	32811	1692	1950	56927	7222
%	7.22	5.46	6.11	3.59	1.16	5.64	6.77	57.64	2.97	3.43	99.99	12.69
Fathers No.	293	120	46	61	15	73	87	524	34	72	1325	413
%	22.11	9.06	3.47	4.00	1.13	5.51	6.57	39.55	2.57	5.43	100	31.17

$\chi^2 = 548.77$ d.f = 9 $\chi^2.001 = 27.88$ P< .001

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V - Summary and Discussion

A. The Extent of the Increase in Preschools

In 1965 there were 10 centres, in 1970 there were 21, and by 1977 the number had increased to 42. It is anticipated that this number will swell to at least 50 in 1978 indicating a continuation of the rapid expansion and an increasing awareness and demand in the community. The preschool population has increased by in excess of 115% since the last Report, and currently approximately 36.22% of children of preschool age in the Illawarra attend a centre for at least part of each week.

The proliferation of such centres does not necessarily mean an optimum spatial distribution. It would appear that some areas have an overabundance of centres whilst centres in other localities have waiting lists extending well into the future, and have no difficulty in filling any place vacated by an absentee on any particular day. In a number of regions (for example Bellambi and Dapto areas) some administrators were critical of local government plans to erect new centres when existing centres in the immediate vicinity were operating well under their maximum enrolment.

B. Diversification of Preschool Administration.

Coincident with recommendations of the previous Report, the administration of preschool centres has diversified from predominantly private into a situation where the community, the Education Department, the Kindergarten Union, the Churches, the Council and most recently the Department of Social Security are gradually increasing their interest and expertise in this extremely important sphere of education. One consequence of this changing scene is the phasing out of the older remodelled or converted halls and homes and the introduction of architecturally designed premises.

C. Licensing of Preschools

Another by-product of the increasing awareness of governments and communities of the value of preschools is reflected in the amount of attention and money allocations to such centres. Whereas previously only 42.86% of centres were fully licenced, only two centres not licensed are small and of a custodial nature.

D. Personnel Training and Subsidies

There has been a rapid increase in the proportion of trained personnel in the centres. Nearly 50% of centres had a least one trained and qualified staff member while most others had personnel attending preschool courses as offered by the Technical College. The increase in the number and the extent of various subsidies also signifies an important change in attitude by various authorities and organizations. Whereas 14.29% of preschools previously were receiving subsidies, now 40.48% are subsidized. These two changes can largely be attributed to state and federal policies of the Australian Labor Party (Education and Science Committee Report 1970). A brief statement by the Liberal Party suggests "that a comprehensive preschool education system should be encouraged as a matter of high priority to the limit of funds that can be made available for the purpose " (Willis 1976 p.13).

E. Hours of Operation and Subsidies

The improvements reported in preschool provision have not been matched by the preschools' meeting demands for the custodial function. At the moment only 4 centres operate between the hours of at least 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. - a decrease from 8 mentioned in the previous Report. While one of the present four centres is substantially under full enrolment, the others are in great demand and indicate a need for such hours

of operation. Economic pressures and constraints were said to preclude extension of hours for most centres which may be one reason why this one centre is not attracting clients. Perhaps it is in this locality that the authorities should examine the manner in which the subsidies are allocated and in turn modify existing subsidy regulations and encourage more of the subsidized centres to open for longer hours. One preschool administrator even went so far as to suggest that the subsidies were channelled into areas other than the preschool which in turn forced them to rely on parents' generosity and fund-raising activities.

F. Cost Structures

The cost of child care has risen dramatically in the last few years. Many subsidized centres were able to undercut the fees of private centres by up to 50%, even though virtually every subsidized centre was operating on shorter hours and thus providing a relatively reduced service. There are signs of some resentment of subsidized centres by some private centres. Most private administrators felt very strongly that the 'disadvantaged' or 'needy' child should receive the subsidy rather than the centre. This would in turn allow more freedom of choice and allow the parents to select the centre most suitable. The most commonly expressed resentment was the fact that the subsidized centres were not fulfilling the custodial needs of the community by having such restricted hours.

The fee structure, on a daily basis, ranged from $2.30 at the cheapest subsidized centre to $5.50 at a non-subsidized private centre. Not all centres operate on a daily basis, some are on an hourly basis, and some sessionally, while others such as two of the Department of Education centres operate on a weekly basis at $9.00 per week. One preschool is conducted on a term basis.

It is interesting to note that 51.70% of parents stated they would make more use of centres if they were free, although 43.55% said they would not. However, even if centres were in fact free, there may be a loss of quality of service into merely a child-minding function.

G. Is the Working Mother a Major Influence?

There is strong evidence that there is increasing participation of women in the workforce, although the Illawarra Region does not show this trend as much as Sydney or Newcastle. Despite this trend, the mothers

of preschool children are typically non-working, accounting for 75.78% of the total. Only 10.95% of mothers were employed full time. However, the 1971 Census figures show that the proportion of women involved in the workforce was 35.10%. What is not known is what the other approximately 25% of working mothers do with their children while they are at work, and why other arrangements are preferred to preschools.

H. The Working Mother's Predicament

As stated previously, the majority of the mothers of preschool children are non-working mothers and are more likely to be members of families earning above the national average. Because fees can be as much as $28.00 a week, it is hardly profitable for a mother to take an unskilled job.

I. Patterns of Use

An indicator that there is little demand for extended child care in the present economic climate is that 60.44% of the total enrolment population attends for 1 day or less per week whilst 84.35% attend for 2 days or less. Some centres limit the number of sessions or days that any particular child can attend. While this has the benefit of allowing the largest possible number of children to be exposed to any benefits of the preschool, it also makes it difficult for working mothers to make full use of the centres.

J. What Type of Parent Patronises Preschools?

One of the major conclusions of the previous report was replicated in this study: that is, the tendency for those parents ranked 'high' on educational qualifications and occupational status to be more highly represented in the preschool population than in the general population. Only 4.37% of the population have acquired at least a tertiary level of

education, but this group constituted just under 20% of the total preschool population. This trend, however, has weakened since the last Report. Similar trends were obtained for occupational status breakdowns. It would therefore seem that the present system quite clearly fails to provide child care for those whose need is greatest, and that it usually fails to provide preschool education for children who are likely to benefit most from it. This would be an even stronger point if enrichment preschooling (Twomey and de Lacey 1977) were provided.

K. Stated Aim of Preschools Versus Parents Requirements

An examination of the similarity/dissimilarity of the stated aims of preschool administrators and the service required by parents showed a marked difference in all areas apart from social development. This may indicate a lack of communication between parents and the aim of the preschool, or it may indicate only a discrepancy between the stated aims of the centres and their actual practices. Probably both of these options have some validity.

L. Are Children Benefiting Equally?

There is little indication of a programmed schedule to cater for children of differing abilities or backgrounds. While most centres formulate programs to provide the development of the children to varying degrees, few go so far as to provide for the slow or disadvantaged child. The larger centres do segregate children of differing ages wherever possible and a number of centres do give special attention to individual children, particularly where emotional and or speech difficulties are encountered. However, there are few concentrated programs specifically designed and aimed at those children who are less fortunate and are at a relative disadvantage. Such programs are, in fact, now available (Twomey and de Lacey 1977).

M. Migrant's Representation

It has been shown that migrant groups are under-represented preschool population. There are a number of factors which may be influencing this pattern. There may be language and comprehension difficulties which result in unfamiliarity with the existing organization of preschools. The immigrant families may be neither as interested in, nor aware of, any benefits to be derived from allowing or encouraging their children to attend preschools. Alternatively, some families may live relatively insular lives in an extended family environment and may prefer

to retain the child in such surroundings until he/she goes to school. Some immigrant groups may regard preschools with suspicion, and as foreign to their cultural backgrounds.

N. Questionnaire Return Rate

The return rate of the questionnaire was 46.53% which is considered here to be a good return, particularly when the preschools were requested to undertake the distribution and collection of the forms.

O. A Brief Comment on the Effect of Preschool Attendance on Both Mother and Child.

There is contradictory evidence about the effects of the employment of mothers on their children. Yarrow (1961), in a review of the literature, suggests that there is an impressive consistency in general conclusions that by "deviating conditions of maternal care in early life tend to be associated with later disturbances in intellectual and personal-social functioning" (p. 459). However, Stolz (1960) takes a differing point of view and suggests that differences between the children of working and non-working parents are slight, if any. She states that there is no difference in adjustment in behaviour relevant to dependence/independence, relatively few preschool children are under stress nor are there any differences in combined problems relating to eating, sleeping and elimination.

Of the effects on the mother sending her child to preschool the evidence is also contradictory. Kligler (in Siegel and Haas 1963) notes that working mothers exhibit marked anxiety and guilt about their children, and reported that they tend to compensate for their absence by trying harder to be good mothers. Yarrow (1961) reports that more working than non-working mothers expressed lack of confidence in the childrearing role. Fisher (1939 in Siegel and Haas 1963) found that working mothers "tried too hard to prove to themselves and their relatives that they weren't neglecting their children" (p. 536). Burchind and Lowell (1959 in Siegel and Haas 1963) state that there is no evidence that "maternal employment as such leads to devastating deviations from optimum parent-child... relationships" (p. 537). Wallston (1973) cites studies by Caldwell and Richmond (1968) and Caldwell and Smith (1970) suggesting that a mother's working need not be detrimental but can actually be beneficial to a child's development.

P. Department of Social Security

This Department has recently entered into the field of preschool education and has produced posters which state "Family day care means that your baby or child is being cared for in an approved private home with some other children. This care can be for all day, part day, out of school hours..." This service is presently catering for 28 or 30 children in Wollongong and is involved in the establishment of at least five new preschool centres.

VI Conclusions and Recommendations

A. General Needs

Preschool centres constitute one of the rapidly growing needs of a contemporary urban-industrial community. The manner in which they are provided not only in the Illawarra but also nationally, and what purposes they are designed for will have far reaching implications and influence on the society of the future.

Until recently the emphasis of organised preschool centres in the region has been on child care - primarily a custodial function. However, preschool education will be given an increasing priority if the development of this community follows the pattern of some of the trends overseas, in Canberra, and in some suburbs of Sydney. There is some evidence that the Illawarra is following this trend, but it is evident that there is a lag in governmental assistance and of public awareness of the benefits of a well-planned and co-ordinated program.

B. Specific Illawarra Characteristics

It was suggested in the previous Report and reiterated here that the Illawarra has special characteristics which make this study potentially important as an indicator of Commonwealth-wide needs in terms of both preschool education and child care. This is so because some relevant characteristics of the Australian community as a whole are to be found in an exaggerated form in the Illawarra. Among them are the following:-

(i) the limitations of the existing centres both in the number and in terms of the types of service currently offered,

(ii) the rate of population growth reflecting a general trend of an expansion of urban populations,

(iii) the high population of immigrants,

(iv) the high rate of industrial expansion.

C. Emphasis on the Educational Function

In view of the conditions outlined in B above the economics of the case for preschool centres are much more compelling if the educational function is fulfilled and especially if its exercise is directed towards areas of need. This will be the case if they effectively cater for children whose family environments are deficient in providing for preschool education. These are children who otherwise would commence school at a relative disadvantage in regard to learning skills and attitudes to learning: already at the age of five or six they could be committed to a school career, and subsequent vocational experience, in which this disadvantage would persist and increase.

The type of program required differs radically from the traditional pattern of preschool activity. This has been demonstrated by Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) and by de Lacey and Nurcombe (1977) and others who have shown that their ideas are adaptable to Australian conditions. There is still much to be done in the development of these methods and programs, which should mean that the Illawarra experience would be of value for other urban-industrial communities. However, the benefits directly accruing to this district alone should justify the cost of the program, because of the advantages to be gained for the whole education and training system through a reduction in the proportion of children who economically and socially gain little and contribute relatively less as a result of the educational process.

D. Regional Plans

It has been suggested in the second study and by other educationalists that the Department of Education should be primarily responsible for the development required to meet those pressing needs. This would be in line with a shift in emphasis from child care to preschool education. It would not mean less provision for child-care: on the contrary. But it would mean in addition that educational programs would begin to play an increasing role in the preschool.

Support from and between the Commonwealth and State Departments of Education, Youth and Community Services and Social Services would be required. In addition, the program would also need the support of the local government and the community.

In finance, a continuation and expansion of the present State backing would be desirable. The State government's move into regional development activity through such committees as the Illawarra Regional Development Committee has highlighted regional needs. By increasing even to a greater

degree the scope for decentralization and for concentrated regional activity involving the whole range of government departments, this may be of particular significance for the neglected areas of preschool education - and for that matter for education at all levels.

E. Priorities

The following could be among the main features of a development of the kind required to meet some of the more urgent needs in preschool education and child care:-

(i) The centres could develop, in association with educationalists, programs specifically designed for children whose home environments lack facilities of the nature required for appropriate preschool education and training within the family unit.

(ii) On the basis of census data and more extensive socio-economic study of the region, different types of preschool education and child care needs for the present and for future use could be estimated.

(iii) Teacher training and teaching programs could be developed to a greater extent and placed under the control of a Regional Preschool Education Board.

(iv) The build-up of teaching staff, the development of buildings and equipment, and the enrolment program could be co-ordinated and planned on a time schedule based on the needs identified and the estimated availability of personnel and finance.

(v) Parents, more particularly mothers, could be involved in the programs as helpers and be influenced towards the provision of a home environment which would support the preschool education program.

(vi) A review and restructuring of the present subsidization scheme as indicated.

(vii) An extension of the hours of operation particularly by subsidized centres would be advantageous where it is clearly needed on economic grounds.

F. Organization and Finance

The most preferable organization of the service should be to provide a free enrolment to attract the children who most need the kind of preschool education recommended. This would not rule out the parallel proliferation of fee-charging centres of the type already in existence: it is recognized that these centres are providing the kind of service required by the children of the majority of families which are able and willing to pay fees to cover costs.

Another recommendation enjoyed wide support from private preschool administrators was that the disadvantaged or needy child should receive the subsidy rather than a particular centre receiving grants. This would not only minimize the potential discriminatory reactions against free preschools but allow the parents to choose the centre which suits the needs of the child and parents alike.

The prior need, however, is the provision of centres for those who are not able to attend centres owing to economic constraints and because the activities provided by the present programs are not appropriate for the disadvantaged child. The benefit to the community would be forthcoming.

As mentioned previously, in the way of acting on these judgments are the following obstacles:

(i) The increase demand which follow if the centres were free (Samuel 1971).

(ii) Other urgent demands for funds in education and other areas.

(iii) Difficulties of applying a means test or other form of non-price discrimination in favour of children who most need the service.

(iv) Possibility of the damaging effects of discretionary powers of selection given to superintendents of centres or to other officials.

(v) Possible ill-effects of segregation of "disadvantaged" children in these centres.

(vi) The very great difficulty of categorizing the children involved.

The most probable evolution would seem to be that preschools might take on the same pattern as free primary and secondary education and compete on equal terms for funds, personnel, and facilities available from the Department of Education. The existing self-financing type of preschool centre would have a similar role to that of private schools - except that the private preschool centre would probably be relatively more numerous, at least in the immediate future and wherever they offer extensive hours of operation.

G. Alternative Approach

It seems highly likely that the NSW Department of Education will move increasingly into preschool education, and increase on the four existing centres. This could in the long run lead to a broad-based development of the type envisaged to meet the needs revealed by this study. However, continual pressure seems needed from all sections of the community before the increase in availability of preschool education can begin to make an appreciable impact upon that section of the child population that needs it most.

Whilst there has been considerable community involvement in the establishment of adequate numbers of preschool centres, there is still a major area of need. If the community is sufficiently far-sighted it will adopt the best possible advice on means of supplying these needs outside the family unit for the children who are less fortunate and thus, each locality might organize itself to provide them.

The problems of the disadvantaged cannot be reduced or prevented unless there is a coordinated, simultaneous attack on all the factors involved. This would require free, high-quality education from preschool onwards as well as attention to other factors such as housing, recreation, physical and mental health and social services for those who cannot afford them. The less fortunate must be accorded equal voice in the planning and development of these and other community services There is growing evidence that the mental competence of less advantaged children grows more where there is attention to upgrading their total ecology.

At the preschool and educational level, intervention for ameliorating the present deficits could be directed to the correction of language difficulties, motor, or general experiential areas.

In view of the difficulties besetting free and segregated preschool education for the disadvantaged , the community groups might follow the procedure outlined below:

(i) Charge fees at about the present rate, but make the substantial adjustments shown to be required as a result of findings previously outlined to make full use of planned capacity of all centres.

(ii) Organize a common program to provide for the common needs of all children, and a supplementary and enriched program, incorporated into the common daily program, to provide for special needs of each group of children.

(iii) Seek government subsidies, to be administered independently of the preschool centres, to refund fees to children of unemployed, single, invalid, some non-English speaking and other parents whose children are likely to be disadvantaged.

(iv) Seek further government subsidies for teacher training, program research and development, of teaching aids, and to cover any operating deficit of the regional centres.

(v) Initiate further research into the disadvantaged sections of the community and endeavour to set up publicity campaigns directed to make the parents aware of such beneficial services.

A combination of the possibilities discussed both above and in Section F may prove more fruitful than following any one, perhaps on a trial or experimental basis so that other possibilities for policies may become apparent. There is much to be gained, both in planning and operating preschools, from collaboration with the Department of Education, particularly as it is represented in the Regional Office. Ultimately, the most rational and effective solution to the operation and management of most preschools, so that they offer the most effective programs for their various clienteles, would still seem to be their incorporation within the state Department of Education. Appropriate management and educational content could then be assured during normal school hours, with the possibility of extending the hours of some preschools on a custodial basis, at some cost to the parents wishing to use this service.

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Appendix - Non-Responders

A questionnaire was distributed to the parents of children in Wollongong preschool centres. A total of 3006 forms were distributed, of which 1436, or 47.77% were returned. Eighteen of these, however, were unusable because of extensive incompletions, illegibility or incomprehensibility, while 1418, or 47.17% were completed and used for this Report.

It would have been possible to distribute 3086 questionnaires, one for each child in the centres, but for the unwillingness of one centre to cooperate in the study. The 1436 questionnaires returned were 46.53% of the total possible. The 1418 completed, usable questionnaires were 45.95% of the possible total.

Table 19

Details of Preschool Population and Questionnaires Returned

Children in preschool centres		Children in preschool centres surveyed	
A	3086	B	3006
Questionnaires Returned	1436		1436
%	46.53	%	47.77
Completed, usable questionnaires,	1418		1418
%	45.95	%	47.17

There is a possibility that this 45.95% sample of preschool parents is biased; for example, a disproportionate number of migrants from non-English speaking countries and less educated parents may, because of language problems, or unfamiliarity with printed questionnaires, not have returned their forms, helping to account for the under-representation of these groups in the present sample.

In order to investigate the possibility of such bias, it was decided to attempt to obtain questionnaires from some 'non-responders' to the original survey. Questionnaires were re-circulated at five preschools, selected as being representative of the preschools in the total area. Eighty

questionnaires, representing 4.8% of non-responders, were distributed, completed, returned and usable.

'Non-responders' were comparied with 'responders' on the variables of mother's country of birth, father's country of birth, mother's work, father's occupation and parents' education, using a chi-squared test. Results of these comparisons are presented in Tables 20 to 24.

Table 20

Mother's Country of Birth

Country of Birth	Responders No.	%	Non-Responders No.	%
Australia	1146	79.20	66	82.50
British Isles	188	12.99	11	13.75
Europe	97	6.70	2	2.50
Other	16	1.11	1	1.25
Total	1447	100.00	80	100.00

$\chi^2 = 2.2657$ d.f = 3 $P > .05$ n.s

Table 21

Father's Country of Birth

Country of Birth	Responders No.	%	Non-Responders No.	%
Australia	1045	72.77	59	73.75
British Isles	202	14.07	14	17.50
Europe	167	11.63	6	7.50
Other	22	1.53	1	1.25
Total	1436	100.00	80	100.00

$\chi^2 = 1.8869$ d.f = 3 $P > .05$ n.s

Table 22

Mother's Work

	Responders No.	%	Non-Responders No.	%
Not Work	857	71.18	63	79.01
Full Time	123	10.22	10	12.35
Part Time	158	13.12	3	3.70
N.S	66	5.48	4	4.94
Total	1204	100.00	80	100.00

$\chi^2 = 6.5747$ d.f = 2 P> .05 n.s

Table 23

Father's Occupation

	Responders No.	%	Non-Responders No.	%
0	293	22.20	22	27.50
1	120	9.09	7	8.75
2	46	3.48	4	5.00
3	61	4.62	2	2.50
4	15	1.14	1	1.25
5	73	5.53	7	8.75
6	87	6.59	0	0
7/8	524	39.70	26	32.50
9	34	2.58	3	3.75
N.S	67	5.08	8	10.00
Total	1320	100.01	80	100.00

$\chi^2 = 14.4207$ d.f = 9 P> .05 n.s

Table 24

Parents' Education

	Responders		Non-Responders	
	No.	%	No.	%
Below Int. cert.	535	18.65	27	16.62
Intermediate "	825	28.77	50	30.86
Tech. College	500	17.43	22	13.58
H.S.C.	302	10.53	16	9.83
Tertiary	350	12.20	19	11.73
University	222	7.74	14	8.64
Not Stated	134	4.67	12	7.50
Total	2868	99.99	160	100.00

$\chi^2 = 7.6933$ d.f = 6 P >.05 n.s

As can be seen from the above tables, there were no significant differences between 'responders' and 'non-responders' on the variables of education, occupation, and country of birth of parents. These results indicate that there was no bias in the original sample in favour of well-educated, Australian-born parents.

The abnormal increase in allocations for early-childhood education and custody that have occurred since 1972 appear to be largely the consequence of policies of the Australain Labor Party. Specifically, a policy statement indicating priority for preschool education was inserted into the New South Wales Labor Party in 1970, as a result of work carried out at the University of Wollongong. The principles embodied in this document were then adopted at Federal level by the ALP, and subsequently implemented.